

Combining Common Sense and Net Nanny Software Is the Best Way to Keep Your Children Safe Online

As a parent you may have concerns about letting your child use the Web. You know the Internet is full of potential for education, but you've also heard about the dangers that children can encounter there. You might wonder if you should completely restrict your child's access to the Internet, email and other online applications to keep them safe.

However, while it might be easy to ban Internet use at home, Internet access is more and more common in classrooms and at the library. It has become an indispensable part of your child's education. This is why it is important for Web safety to start with you, in your home. By educating yourself and your child and following a few basic guidelines, you can empower your child to surf the Web safely.

At Net Nanny, we strongly recommend that you educate yourself on Web safety. The "Simple Steps" below are a good place to start.

Simple Steps

Know the Dangers. Pornography may be the most visible danger on the Web, but parents should be aware of other threats such as online sexual predators, financial scams and Internet addiction. Some online threats you should know about:

- **Pornography** remains a growing concern of parents with children who use the Internet. According to a 2003 study by the Internet filtering software company N2H2, there are more than 260 million pornographic pages on the Web, and this number increases every day. As a result, a child may stumble across adult sites purely by accident. Unsolicited emails, also known as "spam," often contain pornographic links and material. Spammers can also take advantage of chat rooms and instant messaging applications by sending links to adult sites within chat sessions.
- **Online predators** can use the Internet as a tool for luring children into meeting them in person. They use email, chat rooms and instant messaging to make contact with children online, sometimes pretending to be a child or teen themselves. They then build up an online relationship in an attempt to convince the child to meet them face-to-face. It is a scary but very real threat, as documented by the [Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#).
- **Phishing** is the act of illegally obtaining personal information such as credit card numbers, passwords and bank account information. This con is a relatively new but growing threat to Internet users, and one to which children can be particularly vulnerable. Sites like the [Anti-Phishing Working Group](#) are documenting its rise and effects.
- **Internet Addiction** covers various types of online behavior, including compulsive surfing, chat room addiction, obsessive Net gaming and cybersexual addiction, as described by the [Center for Online Addiction](#). When Internet use becomes all-consuming, it can interfere with other activities, impact relationships and lead to feelings of depression or irritability when Internet use is limited.

Talk to Your Child. Child-safety experts say that open communication between parents and children is one of the best ways to promote your child's safety. Surf with your child.

Ask them to show you their favorite sites and activities. Make sure they know that they can talk to you about anything they encounter that makes them uncomfortable. Remind them that, just as in the real world, when they're on the Internet they shouldn't talk to strangers.

Control Access to the Internet. One of the simplest ways to promote safe surfing is to keep the computer in a common room, where you can see and discuss the sites your children visit. Another simple and free technique: teach young children to use a [kid's directory](#) of sites, and older children to use a [family-safe search engine](#) like Net Nanny's (learn more). If your child's computer is in a different room or you want a more comprehensive solution, consider buying a product like Net Nanny, which enables you to set time limits on Internet use, control access to sites, games, chat and file sharing, and set different levels of control for children of different ages.

Monitor Your Child. Simple -- and free -- solutions include sharing an email account with your child and checking the history on your Web browser history to see what sites have been visited. Even if you don't share an account, you should maintain access to their accounts. For older children, and a more complete solution, consider software like Net Nanny.